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RIYADH, PLEASE PASS TO DHAHRAN, DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP,  
INR/B, R/IIP PLEASE PASS TO ALEX FELDMAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PINR](#) [SA](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#)

SUBJECT: LAYALINA: SHOWING THE SOCIAL SIDE OF SAUDI ARABIA

REF: JEDDAH 219

¶1. (U) Since the December 2005 debut of Layalina magazine in Saudi Arabia, the publication has stretched the limits of Saudi culture (reftel). The magazine regularly features Saudis and foreigners in the social scene at restaurants and events and a large section on the men's side of weddings. Over time it appears that the substantive articles have declined as more of the magazine is dedicated to social events.

¶2. (U) Layalina's circulation has greatly increased in a short time with over 20 thousand subscriptions in both Jeddah and Riyadh. The majority of the magazine's sales are from subscriptions in Riyadh, according to Layalina representatives, but the magazine is also sold in book stores. Most of the readers are young adults who are interested in Jeddah and Riyadh's social scene, particularly the private parties that are featured.

¶3. (U) The magazine started because the publishers, Dar Al Hayat, wanted to have a magazine that reported the "glamorous" social scene. It is sold not only in Saudi Arabia but also in Syria, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Lebanon, where it started five years ago. Saudi Arabia is the most recent country to be added for an edition. While Layalina is region-wide, the magazine is specialized to the events happening in a particularly country with the main articles and health/nutrition sections usually written in Beirut where Layalina is printed. The magazine editors try to individualize each country's magazine by the major interests in the country and include interviews with local celebrities.

¶4. (U) Comment: Layalina definitely goes against popular Saudi culture by showing women with their hair uncovered, without abayas on, and regularly mixing with men. It is interesting that most Saudi readers are in Riyadh which is known to be more conservative than Jeddah. Layalina's growing popularity indicates some segments of Saudi society desire to become more liberal. The fact that the publication has not been banned demonstrates the government generally accepts the magazine and must not have yet received significant complaints from the religious establishment. End Comment.  
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